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Thaya

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The earliest textual mention of the four types of melodic forms, *gita*, *alapa*, *thaya*, *prabandha*, in one sequence, is available in Ramamatya's *Svaramela Kalanidhi* (1550 A.D.). While classifying the Deshi *raga*-s of his times the category of *uttamottama raga*-s (page 28, *shloka*-s 1-5), which according to him are free from the mixture of other characteristics (*asankirnataya*) into *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama*, Amatyā gives a list of 20 *raga*-s under and are suitable for use in singing *gita*, *prabandha*, *alapa* and *thaya*. The *madhyama raga*-s, numbering 15, are used occasionally in *gita khandas* (*shloka*-s 6-9), while the so-called inferior *raga*-s, innumerable in number but less illuminating in nature, are unfit for being used in *thaya*, *alapa* and *prabandha* (pp. 29-30, *shloka*-s 9-16). In his *Raga Prakaranam*, Venkatamakhin makes a statement that the *gita*, *thaya* and *prabandha* of Tanappa and others are available for most of the *raga*-s. Some Deshi *raga*-s (Kalyani and Pantuvarali) are unfit for being used in the above forms:

कल्याणिरागः संपूर्ण आरोहे मनिर्वर्जितः ।
गीतप्रबन्धायोग्योऽपि तुरुष्काणामतिप्रियः ॥ १०७ ॥
रागः पन्तुवराल्याख्यः संपूर्णः पामरप्रियः ।
गीतठायप्रबन्धानां दूराद् दूरतरः स्मृतः ॥ १०८ ॥

[*Raga Prakaranam* in *Chaturadandi Prakashika*]

Though the above classification of *raga*-s, on the basis of their suitability for use in compositions, is not very meaningful in the absence of illustrative examples, the reference to these four-fold *raga* forms in one sequence and that, too, in relation to the exposition of the topic of *raga*-s, is quite significant. Further it points to the current prevalence of these forms as early as the period of Ramamatya. Evidence proceeding from the writings in subsequent centuries of eminent scholars who adorned the court of Tanjavur serves to establish the continued popular usage of *gita*, *alapa*, *thaya* and *prabandha* forms. These appear to have been the mainstay of the performances of instrumental and vocal music of those times. Raghunatha Nayaka, the scholar prince of Tanjavur, to whose authorship the treatise *Sangita Sudha* has been ascribed, honoured the eminent musicians and vina players of his court, Vijaya Vilasa. According to an authentic reference, Madhuravani, a dancer, received Kanakabhishekam from the king for proficiency in the rendering of *Chaturdandi* pieces namely *gita*, *alapa*, *thaya* and *prabandha*.

References found in *Valmiki Charitra* allude to the beautiful playing of these four forms by Urvashi, to the accompaniment of the sweet sounds of the *tala* strings traversing the range of *Mandra*, *Madhya* and *Tara Sthayi*. The *rasika*-s expressed their sense of appreciation for the various items and aspects of music rendered in the following statements: *Auraraga*, *Bhale Thayam*, *Chayagu Kampitam*, *Lessa Sthayi*, *Odukku Bapre*, *Ayyare Meettugal*,

Aha Rakti Padalu and so on. Again, the playing of Chaturdandi pieces in Gotivadya by Savitri is referred to in *Shringara Savitri*, a Telugu work by Raghunatha Nayaka. In his *Sahitya Ratnakara*, Yajnanarayana Dikshitar, the learned brother of Venkatamakhin, gives a beautiful description of the wonderful performance of *alapa*, *thaya*, *prabandha* in *Nata raga* by Raghunatha himself. This description compares well and follows the *paddhati* expounded by Govinda Dikshitar in his *Sangita Sudha* for the *raga alapana*. The tradition of performing these compositions, with a view to illustrate the structure of the *raga*-s, appears to have had its origin long before the time of Venkatamakhin and this practice continued till the period of Shahaji and Tulaja Maharajah.

Considering the special importance of these four types of musical forms in the instrumental music of the period, we may consider them as the regular music material available in a performance of those times. This again points to the absence of the other musical forms like *kriti*, *varna* and so on. The term *Chaturdandi*, according to *Sangita Suryodaya*, refers to the *sthai*, *arohi*, *avarohi* and *sanchari varna*-s. The title given by Venkatamakhin to his work, namely *Chaturdandi Prakashika* (*Rāga*), becomes highly significant in this context: it is an indication of the scientific and practical tradition of illustrating the *raga* forms through the four channels of expression. Inspired by the rich musical activity of the period, largely contributed by these forms, Venkatamakhin titled his work as *Chaturdandi Prakashika* and dealt with these four channels of *raga* expression separately in each chapter of his treatise which consists of a total of ten chapters, the last chapter being incomplete.

Sangita Saramrita of Tulaja expounds the significance of the term *Chaturdandi* while describing *raga lakshana*. By quoting and citing illustrative *prayoga*-s from the musical forms of *gita*, *alapa*, *thaya*, *prabandha*, *suladi*, *shloka varna*, *daru*, *pada*, Shahaji and Tulaja try to explain the *rupa* of the *raga*. It follows from this that the melodic structure of the *raga*, as delineated in each of the above forms, must necessarily reveal and unfold the varied aspects of the personality of the *raga*. In each composition, the *raga* form is projected in a special manner. Of these, the *gita*, *alapa*, *prabandha*, *thaya* collectively appear to be the classical modes of *raga* expression with a fairly good tradition behind it. Tulaja in *Sangita Saramrita* (page 72) states that illustrations from the old or traditional *Chaturdandi* pieces:

आरोहावरोहमूर्च्छनातानयोरयं संदर्भो ऽत्र
संगच्छते ऽयं संदर्भो न संगच्छत इत्येतन्निश्चयार्थं प्राचीनगीतप्रबन्धठायालाप-
रूपचतुर्दण्डीसूलादिप्रभृत्युदाहरणलेखनेन स्फुटं यथा भवति तथा लिख्यते ।

are given to determine the occurrence of permissible *prayoga*-s, *tana*-s, and *murcchana*-s in the definition of *raga svarupa*. For instance, the examples of *thaya* cited for *Sri raga* may be taken here. *Dha* is deleted in *thaya*, but *prayoga*-s with *dha* are seen in *udgraha*. Shahaji discusses, in his description of *raga*-s, whether the *raga* is suitable for singing *ghanam alapa* or both. Rendering

tana in *madhyamakala* is *ghanam*. Some *raga*-s lend special scope for the rendering of *tana*, *alapa* and *gita*. This probably inspired the classification of *raga*-s into *ghana*, *naya* and *desya*.

Venkatamakhin justifies the musical distinction between *gita* and *prabandha* on the evidence of the *lakshya* heritage handed over by Gopala Nayaka. The gradation prescribed for the *shiksha vidhi* or learning process in the enlarged *svara* material of *Saramrita* (section 5, pages 17 to 19) is in the sequence *sarali*, *alankara*, *gita*, *prabandha*, *thaya* and *raga alapa*. Venkatamakhin gives the *thaya samanyalakshana* in the seventh chapter in seven *shloka*-s. It is surprising that in *Sangita Sudha*, written by Raghunatha Nayaka, the *thaya*, one of the popular *Chaturdandi* forms, the playing of which had been referred to in contemporary writings and which Raghunatha himself has been referred to as having played, is not mentioned in the sense of a separate *raga* form as treated by Venkatamakhin. The fact always remains that it is in connection with the *raga alapana paddhati* that the *thaya* is spoken of and discussed in treatises.

The technique of performance of *thaya* as dealt with by Venkatamakhin resembles the *alapa* form expounded in the *Sangita Ratnakara* and the *sthayi-paddhati* of *Sangita Sudha*. According to Venkatamakhin, the *thaya* is performed by choosing an appropriate *sthayi svara* which assumes the role of a strong basis for further melodic movements. It is only the *amsha svara*.

ततः स्थायी भवेत्तत्र स्थायिशब्दार्थ उच्यते ।
यत्रोपवेश्यते तानः स्वरे स्थायी स कथ्यते ॥ ११ ॥

(*Chaturdandi Prakashika*, *Shloka* 11, *Alapa* Section)

The expression of the *raga* is generated only by a concentration of melody on the so called *sthayi svara*. It is something more than a *graha*. A movement from the *sthayi svara* upto the fourth note above is to be done by executing four *tana*-s in the ascending order and, in the same manner, a cluster of four *tana*-s in the downward *krama* is to be rendered as far as the *sthayi svara*, while the *vinyasa* takes place on *Mandra Sa*. The *sthayi* note is also known as *Eduppu*, *Makarini* and *Muktayi* in popular parlance. The author quotes his parama guru Tanappacharya Sekhara as an authority on *Thaya lakshana*.

परमो गुरुरस्माकं तानप्पाचार्यशेखरः ।
सर्वेषामपि रागाणामेतल्लक्ष्मानुसारतः ।
तायान्प्रकल्पयामास लक्ष्यमस्य तदेव सः ॥ ७ ॥

(*Chaturdandi Prakashika*, *Shloka* 7, *Thaya* Section)

गीतठायप्रबन्धा हि तानप्पायैः प्रवर्तिताः ॥ १०५ ॥

(*Chaturdandi Prakashika*, *Shloka* 105, *Raga* Section)

Subbarama Dikshitar follows this description in his treatment of *alapa* and *thaya*. The *alapa lakshana* found in *Sangita Ratnakara* mentions four *svasthana*-s i.e. *Mukha Chala*, *Dvyardha*, *Ardha Sthitha* and *Nyasa*. The *raga alapana* is performed within the boundaries marking the *svasthana*-s. After establishing the *raga* in the *sthayi svara*, which is generally the *amsha svara*, the elaboration of the *raga* is done by adding the next three notes one by one and this is *Mukha Chala*. The second stage prescribes the exposition of the *raga* from the *sthayi svara* till its fourth note. A wider treatment of the *raga* is perhaps available in the *Ardha Sthitha* or the third stage in which the range of movement is from the second *sthayi* note till the eighth note. In the last *svasthana* the eighth note is taken as the *sthayi* and *sanchara*-s are done as far as its *samvadi svara*. The method of *alapa* enunciated in *Sangita Sudha* and which is based on the tradition of Vidyaranya and his *Sangita Sara* describes five stages in the development: *akshiptika*, *ragavardhini*, *sthayi*, *vartani*, or *nyasa* of these. The *sthayi* section of the *alapana*, as treated in the *Sudha*, takes into consideration the important notes of the *raga* which are taken one by one as the *sthayi svara* and these are treated as fresh bases for developing elaborate *sanchara*-s and thus indicate the other melodic centres in the process of *raga* elaboration in every section. For instance, in the *Nata raga*, the following are identified as the *sthayi* notes, *sa pa ma* and *Madhya sthayi sa*. Generally the *amsha svara*-s of the *raga* are chosen as the melodic centres or *apanyasa*-s for expanding the *raga* in a *vidari*, by singing specific number of *tana*-s in ascent and descent.

In the manuscript collection of the Saraswati Mahal Library a number of *gita*, *alapa*, *thaya*, *prabandha* and *pada* compositions are prescribed as illustrative *lakshya*-s for the *raga lakshana*. These are illustrative of the *lakshana* laid down by Govinda Dikshitar and Venkatamakhin for the *alapa* and *thaya* forms. What is most admirable and interesting is the fact that these forms running to many folios were already composed (*nibaddha*) and recorded for posterity in palm leaves. These are *pure melodic forms* without words and formal rhythm and fall within the realm of extemporisation. These are referred to as *gatra dandi* and *jantra dandi*—those meant for vocal and instrument music. The former is sometimes provided with *nom tom*, the latter having only *svara* notation. The *gatra dandi* resembles the modern *tanam* singing. There are some examples of *thaya* in *raga*-s like *Gurjari*, *Mukhari* but *tam nam* is also found as in *gatra dandi*. The *Jjavari tana* in *Nata*, and *thaya* in *Pratapavarali*, for instance, have only *svara* notation. We have *thaya* forms for almost all *raga*-s, and in *raga*-s which are dubbed *apurva* and uncommon in our times. *Thayam* for the following *raga*-s are available in manuscripts: *Mechabauli*, *Gaulipantu*, *Balahamsa*, *Shuddha Vasanta*, *Lalita*, *Purva Gaula*, *Samanta*, *Padi*, *Gurjari*, and so on. *Pakka sarani thaya* are purely instrumental forms composed for being played on the *vina*.

A structural analysis of the *alapa* form and *thaya* forms preserved in the manuscripts reveals a remarkable similarity between the two. The *thaya* form is very much like an *alapana* form, the distinction lies in that the former is performed with *svara* and *nom tom* sometimes, the latter without *svara*. These forms must have slowly merged with the *alapana* forms and became part of it in later times.

Just as *gita* and *prabandha* are considered as separate and individual forms by Venkatamakhin and in the *lakshya* tradition, the *alapa* and *thaya* forms must have also been traditionally handed down as separate forms and as constituent parts of the *Chaturdandi* complex.

The Telugu dictionary, *Sangita Shabdārtha Chandrika* (pp. 162-163) makes an interesting reference to the different interpretations regarding *thaya*. According to the author, the *thaya prabandha* is identified as a composition very much like *gita* in structure, consisting of simple *jati*-s or *sol-kattu svara*-s and is meant for *abhyasa gana*. *Thaya*-s are useful guides for improving the plucking and finger technique of vina students. Sri Purandara Dasa and Venkatamakhin are said to have composed many *thaya*-s and *prabandha*-s. It is obvious that the *thaya* is treated here as a kind of *prabandha*. Tulaja's enlarged *svara* section makes a similar reference to this. According to another interpretation, making a *svara* as the *sthayi* and producing music with that *sthayi* note is *thaya*. Next, this is to be followed by the singing of the *sthayi svara* (*vadi*) and its *samvadi svara*. While rendering the *alapa* of Shankarabharana raga, *shuddha madhyama* when sung as the *adhara shadja*, the raga Kalyani results. Thus by taking the different *svara*-s of the raga as the *adhara shadja* or *graha svara*, the *chhaya* of another raga is brought in.

Finally the return to the original scale of notes is made and this is *thaya* which is to be performed only in vocal music. This explanation of the concept of *thaya* corresponds with that of *graha bheda* in *alapana* and has no reference to the earlier textual treatment of the subject.

So far, *thaya* has been considered primarily as one of the constituents of the *Chaturdandi* and its form as defined in the works. Before the period of Ramamatya, the term *thaya* was freely used in the text of *Sangita Samayasara* (Chapter II, p. 6). It is evident that the usage is not in the sense of a musical form as expounded in later works (*Svaramela Kalanidhi*, *Chaturdandi Prakashika* and Tulaja's *Sangita Samritha*). In the treatment of *sthaya* which is a concept of overwhelming melodic importance, Parshvadeva refers to many of the *sthaya*-s as *thaya*-s. What relation exists between the *thaya*-s of *Samayasara* and the *thaya* forms of *Chaturdandi Prakashika* is, however, not clear. Only the terms used are found to be similar. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the concept of *sthaya* was a highly significant one and as many as ninety-six of them have been mentioned and described by Sharngadeva, Parshvadeva, and later writers like Kumbha and Govinda Dikshitar who followed Shrngadeva mostly. Dr. Premalata Sharma in her valuable critical paper on *Sthaya-s* (*Indian Music Journal* 1964, Vol. III; 1965, Vol. IV; 1966, Vol. V) traces the origin of *sthaya*-s in the *dhatu*-s (vina techniques) of Bharata and in the *alankara*-s. *Sangita Ratnakara* classifies *sthaya*-s into (1) Ten popular *sthaya*-s of the *asankirna* type (2) twenty *asankirna* types (3) thirty-three *sankirna lakshana sthaya*. *Sthaya*-s are further spoken of in their relation to many factors: (1) The volume and intensity of the tone; (2) Shake; (3) *Rasa* or effect; (4) Order of *svara*-s; (5) *Chhaya* or *Kaku*; (6) Kinds of *Kaku*-s namely *Svara*, *Raga*, *Anyaraga*, *Kshetra Kaku* and *Yantra Kaku*; (7) *Vadya Shabda* and so on.

From the available descriptions of the varieties of *Sthaya*, we are led to identify them as melodic phrases or melodic units, rather melodic abstractions

which are capable in themselves of evoking certain aesthetic effects. These rightly have a direct bearing in creating the *svarupa* of the *raga*. The *sthaya*-s are the *avayava* or limbs of the *raga*, and having a characteristic tonal movement, these unfold facets of the personality of the *raga*.

The structure of a *raga*, its melodic content, is one of a complicated and integral nature. Many aesthetic factors go into the operation of creating the *raga* form which is a unique musical value. True, some notes are melodically prominent but it is the traditionally associated and characteristic melodic phrases, their proper employment and the tempo of rendering such phrases that really define a *raga* and serve to distinguish two *raga*-s with the same scale structure. The same melodic phrase rendered in a slow tempo and a quick tempo affects the contour, shape and meaning of the phrase itself. For instance, phrases in Devagandhari and Arabhi, Surati and Kedaragaula. That compositions and phrases sound best at a certain speed in a given *raga* is well-known. These and many other characteristic features are referred to in the *raga lakshana* material. But it is very interesting to note in the definition of *raga lakshana*, the omission of the concepts of *alankara*, *kaku*, *sthaya* and even *gamaka*. The importance of the above four concepts, which are closely allied, can never be over-estimated. *Kampana* or shake is a major variety of *gamaka*; *alankara* refers to the different decorative tonal patterns. The *kaku* provides tonal variations, while the *sthayavaga* is the dynamic melodic phrase.

The essential features of *kaku*, *sthaya*, *alankara* coupled with *gamaka* enter into the formation of the concept of *sthayavaga* which is thus a comprehensive term but not any more in current usage.

The *Shiksha* literature contains valuable material regarding the intonations, (tonal variations in Vedic recitation). The different kinds of enunciation of *svara*-s, the effect produced, the pitch level etc., have been described. The *Shiksha*-s speak in detail in respect of the nature of tones to be produced in accordance with the time of chanting of the Vedas. Some of the ten *guna*-s of music — *rakta*, *purna*, *alankrta*, *prasanna*, *vyakta*, *vikshta*, *slakshna*, *sama*, *sukumara*, and *madhurya* — are seen to have gone into the formation of *sthaya*. So also, the *giti*-s or musical styles, with the characteristic tonal movement and use of *gamaka*, compare well with some of the *sthaya*-s. The *alankara*, *kaku*, *sthaya* and *gamaka* signify the different aspects of melodic decoration.

In conclusion, the *sthaya* or Sharngadeva and Parshvadeva who called it *thaya* may be understood as a melodic phrase with a rich musical potential and may be referred to as key statements in a *raga*. These actually enter the fabric of *raga alapana* structure. It is these which are the constituent elements of the *alapana* form and *thaya* form. A *svara*, be it a *raga chhaya svara*, rendered with proper *gamaka*, by itself cannot create a melodic line. So also a mere combination of *svara*-s, ascending and descending in characteristic movement (*varna*), and a pattern of *svara*-s, however beautiful it may be, cannot straightaway delineate the personality of the *raga*. It is only when all these phenomena enter into a single melodic idea, informed by a phrase constituted by suitable tones, that the image of the *raga* is revealed in the true sense. The function of every kind of musical form, *nibaddha* or *anibaddha*, is to crystallise

and express the beauty of certain facets of the *raga* in a most attractive and suitable garb. The form is essentially a medium of melodic expression and, in the hands of creative artists, the form and the melodic idea become inextricable, one beautiful integrated experience, in which total identification of form and melody takes place. Especially in the case of *raga alapana* and *tanam*, the melodic conception is absorbing to the extent that their inherent physical form defined in terms of *akshiptika* etc., disappears into the melody stream. Perhaps it is to emphasise the important role of form in the rendering of *raga alapana* and *thaya*, that our *vaggeyakara*-s composed *raga alapana* and *thaya* forms.
